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CHILE:

Regime Tightens Political Controls

The state of siege and the reappointments of the Cabinet give President Pinochet a temporary advantage over the opposition, but they may further polarize the country and eventually reduce his ability to delay the transition to democratic rule.

the state of siege has been imposed in reaction to terrorist actions last week and to alleged efforts by democratic opposition groups to destabilize the government. The 90-day measure strengthens the regime's arbitrary powers, notably the right to imprison dissidents in secret locations indefinitely.

Pinochet also has imposed a midnight-to-dawn curfew in major cities and has called out the Army to enforce it.

Pinochet made only two minor changes in the Cabinet. The ministers, led by Interior Minister Jarpa, had resigned en masse on Monday after Pinochet announced a harder line on the transition to democratic rule. the minor changes surprised almost all observers, including regime insiders, because replacements were expected in Jarpa's post and in key economic portfolios.

he told the press he agreed that tough measures are needed to restore calm.

Comment: Pinochet's actions reflect his determination to clamp down on leftist extremists, to slow the transition to democratic rule, and to minimize the fallout from a forced reorganization of the Cabinet. Pressure from the junta evidently forced Pinochet to back away from dropping Jarpa from the Cabinet.

In order to persuade Jarpa to stay on, Pinochet may have had to make commitments to speed up the transition timetable. Whether he will abide by any such commitments or whether Jarpa will stay in the Cabinet remains uncertain.

Pinochet's actions have further polarized Chilean politics by strengthening radicals advocating violence and by weakening those favoring a negotiated transition.

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